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# Labor and Media: A Strained Relationship

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**Labor and Media: A Strained Relationship**

By

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B.A., American University, 1997

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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ABSTRACT:

The labor movement or union community of America has been in a steady decline for more than a decade. The 1950s saw the pinnacle of success with one-third of the U.S. workforce being unionized. Today only 8% of the private workforce is unionized. One way in which this decline may be perceived as more pronounced is through media alienation. According to journalists across the nation such as Philip M. Dine unions have been alienated by media and its type of union coverage. In this study, I analyze the way in which the New York Times portrays the labor movement during the Bush administration from the years 2001-2008. I utilize a content analysis of terminology and an in-depth sentence-by-sentence method. The findings suggest that political climates may have a pronounced effect on the print presses treatment of unions in its news articles. The study revolves upon issue coverage, general type of coverage per article, most unions represented, and quantity of coverage. The data is collected and presented per year, Bush term and complete terms of Bush presidency between 2001 and 2008. The data collected presents transformations within the union community similar to a media SWOTT analysis of unions for the years 2001-2008. These changes are important for their diverse effects upon the work community as a whole. My hypothesis that the press coverage of unions will be negative during the Bush Era (2001-2009) is proven to be incorrect. The press coverage results are abundantly positive for press in both forms of my content analysis. This leads to a great discussion on the future of similar studies and their effect on unions.

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## INTRODUCTION

The continuing decline of the American economy makes me wonder about many more things than rise in prices. The costs seem to rise in every area of our lives especially for union members. As a unionized City of Chicago garbage woman I have seen many changes within the past ten years. Chicago is sometimes described as a “union city,” in that unions in many ways are stronger than businesses here when it comes to issues of labor. As I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s during the Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Bush presidencies, I saw various changes within the marketplace and communities such as higher unemployment among union family members and friends. As I became an adult in the 1990s and 2000s during the Clinton and Bush presidencies, I became observant of what I perceived as decreasing union power within Chicago; it was no longer the “union city” that I remembered when I was a child. Why was this happening? Where could it possibly stem from? Did the media have a role in this transformation?

My job has changed with these presidencies as well. In years past, two people would pack a truck with garbage; now it is only one person. At least once a week every truck crew diminishes to one laborer with the same demands as if there were two laborers. The compensation that we receive to do the work that used to be done by two people is a \$2.76 increase in hourly pay for that day. So, on those days, I only get about \$18 extra dollars for hauling garbage by myself, rather than the double-salary, even though I am doing double the work. The City reaps the benefit of cutting almost \$200 from its payroll per person for the day. My co-workers air their grievances, but to silence. Once a company breaks the

strong back of a union it just seems to continue until the union is another corporate puppet. What outlets do unions have to convey their message of social justice? The press. Public relations are now the king of communication for any business.

The media is a source of information, biased or unbiased for the majority of Americans. On our way to work or school many people enjoy reading the paper on the bus or train ride into their eight-hour shift. We take pleasure in this solitude while learning the headlines and in many cases the opinion of the newspaper as well. What many Americans don't realize is that the media uses the press and other forms of communication to promote their beliefs. As a City of Chicago garbage truck union member I started to disagree with the way the press handled the coverage of unions. As I became more aware of corporate influence I started to see this as proof in my Masters Studies research as well. I wasn't just a disgruntled reader but was conveyed by the press as a worthless worker (many articles revolving around garbage truck crews in Chicago seem to focus upon corruption or theft of time by crews). As I began to read more scholarly journal articles my opinion of the press was correct-there is a bias in media. The press does shape their messages and formation of articles to support corporate beliefs. After reading more Marxist theory I surely thought that the press coverage of unions would be negative as the bourgeoisie ownership of the press would be able to frame their own thoughts into the paper. But what I found was much more interesting as I began to research the New York Times on union articles. My belief on press framing of articles had to be developed as a content analysis which

enlightened me to the press's more pro-union stance than I previously believed. My hypothesis states that unions would receive negative coverage within the press during the Bush Era (2001-2009). Even under a very anti-labor president as President Bush the press did have some positive messages regarding unions.

This personal story was my true inspiration for researching unions within the media. I would hopefully find an answer to my own questions regarding changes in unions. I wanted to find answers that might be able to push forward the hard work of many generations to ensure social justice within the working lives of millions. There are many differing opinions on the reasons and means American unions declined throughout the past thirty years. As classes struggle to attain the American Dream, unionization is no longer the answer to middle-class status. The social structure of a complex industrial society such as America is continuously changing. What were the changes during the George W. Bush administration for unions? Did his anti-union stance have a great impact upon unions? Which unions are still powerful and what issues seem to be their greatest focus? The study being presented asked these questions. As the political paradigm continuously shifted during the Bush years his anti-union campaign did not. An in-depth content analysis of the New York Times during his double tenure exposes this campaign.

The purpose of this research is three-fold: (1) to explore the major union issues and themes during the Bush administration; (2) to demonstrate if an anti-labor campaign in the mainstream American press was strong during the Bush tenure; and (3) to determine to what degree, if at all, the New York Times as a



journalistic medium framed their reporting on union activities in a negative way. This study can be helpful for unions, sociologists, political scientists and economists in understanding unions methodological reactions to anti-unionism and to further develop an understanding of the press and new unionism.

The study begins in Chapter 1, where I chronologically document the history of American unions from their pivotal strength to their current weakened position. This introductory historical review will also include changes within union organizing, membership and contractual bargains. The leading researchers in union studies are employed to set the background of union history including Clawson and Clawson, Voss and Fantasia, Philip M. Dine and Michael Schiavone are incorporated to strengthen the background of this research. A pivotal issue discussed is the rise in anti-unionism at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The divide of the American union umbrella organization, the AFL-CIO, will end this chapter.

There are a variety of studies on union decline and only a few articles on union revitalization, neither of which adequately address the purpose of my research. So, I began an expansive literature review to find articles and theories that were related to my question. Chapter 2 will indulge the reader in the numerous studies surrounding media and unions and how these can be tied together in this study. This review is thoroughly detailed and exploratory. The literature is utilized to deeply examine and theorize union's relationships with politics and the press. Joe Bekken's work on the history of unions and the press lend clarity to a muddled relationship. Burkean theory blends in to expand this clarity into the mind's eye of the media. Lastly, theories unfolding the agenda

setting and framing that news is reported completes the story: “who, what, where, why, when and how” media translates union issues in the press.

In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of my methodology, beginning with how I employed grounded theory to answer my questions. I begin this chapter by explaining the terminology based inductive manner of unions within the press. The New York Times (NYT) was chosen due to its expansive coverage of national news. First, a terminology-based content analysis of union articles will be detailed. Then I detail a content analysis assessing the level of positivity, negativity, and neutrality of each sentence of each article. These two types of methods within the study properly contain a question such as union’s relationship with the media.

Chapter 4 documents my findings. Do I find the answer to my research question of a negative representation of unions and the media? Actually, I find quite the opposite. It is a more daring study than I had thought. Do the numbers in the terminology content analysis lend support to my theory or is it the sentence by sentence analysis? Actually, both parts of the content analysis find a more positive note on union coverage in the press. But it’s not always positive. Especially, 2004 still has me scratching my head. This study unearths many presupposed explanations of the press’s coverage of unions. In Chapter 5, I re-emphasize the study’s findings and their implications to future research on unions.

## CHAPTER ONE

According to avid unionist Nelson Lichtenstein anti-unionism is more pervasive in America than throughout Europe or Latin America (Lichtenstein, 2002). The Bush tenure is a perfect example of this. “Since the 2000 election, organized labor has had to deal with a hostile U.S. Congress and the presidency of George W. Bush, who has presided over what many view as one of the most anti-union administrations in recent history,” (Panagopoulos and Francia, 2008). The struggle includes a variety of factors such as negative National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decisions, immigration, private sector financial woes and globalization. In the content analysis findings in Chapter 4, I find that these issues are repetitive in press coverage. This repetition in articles can be linked to the type of coverage unions receive in the press.

According to Joe Bekken (2005), from the 1950s until present day newspaper coverage of unions is declining, a finding which my research corroborates in Chapter 4. He states there is a continuation of “...patterns of coverage shifted to an almost exclusive focus on major strikes and contract disputes...with declining attention to union charitable, political and educational activities,” (Bekken, 2005). Furthermore, the undersized amount of articles can be connected to “...news media outlets and their dependency on advertising revenue suggests that news organizations’ responsibility to provide information to the public is disrupted by their need to raise capital and secure profits,” (Carriero, 2005). The dearth of union articles limited my investigation somewhat, but a

detailing of the most-discussed topics and themes during the eight-year Bush presidency gave supportive context to the findings of the content analysis that I discuss in Chapter 4.

To demonstrate the union struggle, I begin by briefly providing an overview of the position of unions during throughout time. Issues within and surrounding unions are important as a background to the variables strengths within the study.

### ***The Rise and Fall of Unions in the 20th Century***

#### ***The 1930s: the Marketplace Changes***

As many Americans fought throughout the Depression to feed themselves and their families, the question of workplace safety truly expanded into a union movement. The first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the United States went from heavily producing raw materials such as steel, coal and textiles to electrically driven consumer luxury products such as the automobile (Lichtenstein, 2002). In this same period, labor production increased by “43 percent, while wages barely held their own,” (Lichtenstein, 2002: 23). Hence, workers became consumers who wanted the new products but still could not afford them. During this time period, and potentially linked to this new consumer desire, the Fordian theory of every worker that makes a product should be able to buy that product, was a rising concept in the labor issues (Gini, 2001). We, as Americans at the time, wanted to expand our consumer palate and we could if we (and corporations) abided by the Fordian theory of increasing salary and benefits so we could purchase and consume more and more products.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized this new consumer need and the many working poor when he supported the construction and enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 (Lichtenstein, 2002). Roosevelt stated “no business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country,” (Lichtenstein, 2002: 25). Within this act was the Wagner Act, which guaranteed workers the right to create unions and grieve unfair work practices. The largest umbrella union for Americans would soon begin-the American Federation of Labor (AFL) staging mass protests, strikes and riots across America demanding businesses to accept unionization. At the same time the Congress of Industrial Organizations began the same tidal wave of actions for unionization. The New Deal Era of the 1930s and early 1940s created industrial democracy or the means for many immigrants to achieve the American dream by creating unions. These “new unionists” would be able to have decent wages, health benefits, housing, educations and security if they could become union more than if not. As in any time in America immigrants are highly separated into the lower class jobs that exposed them to hazardous conditions. These new American dreams could become true through unions. A middle class salary would enable these new comers to buy houses, cars and vacations.

### ***The 1950s: Merging to create greater union strength***

During the 1950s the height of unionization was cemented with the merger of the AFL-CIO, which would control unions across America still under the New Deal imperatives for labor. The AFL had united the mostly unskilled laborers

across America, such as laborers, garbage men and street sweepers. There were great numbers but they could easily lose a union contract due to the lack of trade skills. This changed when they merged with the more trade skilled CIO members who were carpenters, welders and electricians. These certified members would demand better benefits and wages as replacing their workers was harder due to skill and certification levels. This merger created an army of workers across the nation that would strike, negotiate and work together. The AFL-CIO led workers from the garment industry to tradesmen.

By the 1950s, unions were organized across industries, and structured into a tiered national and international chapter organizational structure. The AFL-CIO, then, became an international organization with national chapters. Its organizational structure mimics the federal structure of the United States government where there is a large overarching government, with state and local governments subsumed underneath it and subject to the mandates of the Federal laws.

Using Michels (1915) concept of “the iron law of oligarchy,” during this time period, unions transformed into having an oligarchic leadership, where power effectively rested in the hands of a small group of insiders who protected and perpetuated their own power and interests at the expense of the workers. Unions believed their large numbers of members gave them sway in negotiations with corporations and the government. This was true up until the 1960s when the economy and work place began to change (Gini, 2001). Unions had become an institutionalized interest group ignoring the local needs of its members (Voss and

Sherman, 2000). In response to outside influences in politics and corporations unions were being represented by the views of the upper management of unions; many of whom hadn't been on a union shop floor in possible decades and probably no longer held the same point of view and interests of the laborers they were elected to represent.

***The 1960s and 1970s: Outside influences on the marketplace***

The 1960s brought changes to labor, technical and trade unions with the advent of technological renovations of the American workplace (Gini, 2001; Schiavone, 2008; Slaughter, 2007). Outside influences upon unions included technological, political and trade changes within the marketplace that directly affected union workers as a whole. Technology and imports become a Faustian bargain for the union workers of America. At the same time that they were driven to be the average American consumer and own more than they could afford they no longer had any control over their wages that gave them access to consume. Businesses automated their assembly lines cutting the average union and non-union worker out of a job; their business plan was "better technology, better processes, and fewer, better workers," (Gini, 2001). The decline of unions began in response to these technological advances.

As Clawson and Clawson note, "from 1945 to 1980, union wage settlements almost always involved wage increases; thereafter, unions frequently made concessions on both wages and benefits." In other words, they traded their benefits to maintain employment due to the lower cost non-union workers corporations would replace them with. According to Rosenfeld (2009) union

negotiations for benefits and pay became increasingly compared to those of non-union workers. Bargaining "...shifted from demands by workers to demands on workers," (Rosenfeld 2009:18). Technology fueled the downfall by making manufacturing positions (previously unionized) obsolete because of robotics and computers.

***The 1980s: Political opportunity and fraud create more obstacles for unions***

By the 1980s, the technology-fueled reduction in unionized positions was fueled by the actions of Ronald Reagan, a vocally anti-union President. Further creating obstacles for union power was by the 1980s the reputation of unions as being controlled by an oligarchy and its leadership riddled with corruption and racketeering, was already firmly established (Schiavone, 2008; Dine, 2008). This may be one of the reasons that President Reagan, presumably seizing a political opportunity, broke the air traffic controllers strike when unions were in a paralytic state. This strike break would be the beginning of a strong stance against unions by the government and corporations. Almost like being kicked when unions were down, corporations began to more vocally demand concessions and wage and benefit decreases in order to increase their company profit (Voss and Sherman, 2000). Companies used additional tactics such as fighting the National Labor Relations Board decisions, shutting down factories and moving companies into Right to Work states in the Southern states of the United States.

In 1981, rather than negotiating with the demands of the air traffic controllers on strike, President Reagan simply replaced them with nonunionized workers. Giving private industry the "new" right to lock their doors against union



workers during contract negotiations or simply fire all the union workers and hire “scabs” (term for people who cross picket lines during strikes of union activities against companies). During this same time, due to globalization of manufacturing, businesses began to move production to locations outside of the United States to save money on labor costs (“off-shoring”), thereby leaving fewer manufacturing jobs for union workers (Slaughter, 2007). This decline was further accelerated, and union political clout was severely weakened in part to the increased leadership and ruler ship of the Republican Party for the next two decades (Clawson and Clawson, 1999).

***The 1990s: new regime of politics changes unions***

The 1990s, the weakened unions were met with even more dismal future for labor. Their structure for negotiating wages had become an established oligarchical bureaucracy (Voss and Sherman 2000). Losing their populist roots evident when public support of unions reached a low of 58% of Americans polled, down 5 points since a high of 73% in 1937 (Panagopoulos and Francis, 2008). Neoliberalism expanded under the leadership of the Republican Party lending a greater comparative non-union perspective to production (Clawson and Clawson, 1999). During the same time period union membership in the private sector declined from 39% to 10% of all jobs in the American workforce (Panagopoulos and Francis, 2008). The lack of numbers, a bureaucratic stronghold on union organizations, technological infusion within the workplace, globalization and the lack of political clout left the once great leaders of work place rights and the entry way to the middle-class at the cemetery gates.

American production began to expand overseas during the 1990s at a rapid pace unlike ever before which would negatively impact unions. This decade witnessed a great expansion of off shoring negatively affecting unions. Off shoring is the relocation of the provision of a service or part of a manufacturing process to another country (Chase, 2008: 654). Off shoring has two main destructive points for labor in America: wage inequality in developed countries creates a trade inequality and labor becomes divided along industry lines or united in a class (Chase, 2008: 54). These jobs become permanent vacancies as business knew they could increase profit on low labor wages overseas meaning permanent job loss on American soil. Business gains entry into new markets across the globe if their prices could remain low including new markets in countries surrounding the ones they were now starting low wage companies in. Wage inequality has spread across the globe making it harder for unions to create a powerful bargaining structure (Bergene, 2007).

Technology and globalization amongst other factors combined to create a powerful force driving profits against unions by creating antagonism between unions and business. Low non-wage and sometimes non-American workers gain these new profits for companies. These companies directly extract union jobs from American workers and soil. Along with these other factors studies suggest import rates have had a great impact on the decline of unionism. Slaughter (2007) and Kletzer (2005) insist that a high import rate in America and other leading countries creates a job deficit. Kletzer (2005) like Slaughter, agree that union bargaining power is disadvantaged when Federal Direct Investment (direct

investment into offshore countries for manufacturing and production from building companies to expanding into foreign markets) has skyrocketed from 10% in 1980 to 60% today (Slaughter, 2007).

This job deficit weakens union bargaining power due to lack of membership and corporate comparisons of labor costs. Unions cannot attain jobs or keep jobs within the U.S. borders if companies want to maximize profits using lower labor and taxes they can receive in foreign countries. Unions need employment to be linked from US companies to consumers around the world in order to maintain jobs. Unions want the production to begin and end in America so they have a wider field of employment opportunities. Nations, small businesses and unions are 'left with little bargaining power in the face of an internalized financial system, globalized production, and huge TNCs (transnational corporations)', (Bergen, 2007). Transnational Corporations can use foreign soil to create a product and distribute it to America. This creates a job loss along with taxes and other governmental revenue. Unions, already in decline, cannot fight these types of organizations. Therefore, globalization is yet another obstacle for unions to flourish and to be positively represented in the corporate owned and operated press.

### ***The 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Unions Face a New Day***

As American unions entered the 21<sup>st</sup> Century union leaders were perplexed at the atmosphere surrounding their institution. "Union coverage of the overall labor force [had] fallen from 23.3 percent in 1983 to 14.3 percent in 2003," (Slaughter, 2007: 329). The greatest obstacle would be having the

strongest anti-labor president in the history of the United States (Feeley, 2009). President Bush created an ensemble cast of anti-labor administrators from the Chamber of Commerce to minimizing the NLRB. An example of Bush's stance on anti-unionism is exemplified with the suspension of the Davis-Bacon Act after Hurricane Katrina and blocking the strikes of airline workers after September 11th. This suspension allowed for lower wages to be paid to construction workers who were already making a minimal \$9 an hour (Labor Law Journal: Fall 2005 and Spring 2009). Representative George Miller called the action "a callous and disastrous move" in an already poverty stricken state (Labor Law Journal: Fall 2005 and Spring 2009). Even as federal funds trickled into New Orleans, Bush was making it nearly impossible for unionized workers there to be paid a decent wage let alone the non-unionized workers.

Technology also changed the face of American production with many functions of an assembly line now being done through robotics. The widespread use of computerized labor from emailing a message to programming a computer to install a window in a GM truck has eliminated thousands of jobs (Rosenfeld, 2009, Godard, 2009 and Gini 2001). Technological unemployment has created a smaller workforce-even though manufacturing increased 35% from 1979 to 1992 the workforce shrank by 15% (Gini, 2001). The dire predictions of the future for the major industrial-manufacturing sector are even worse. In 2000 less than 17% of the workforce was employed in blue collar work-even smaller today (Gini, 2001).

Anti-unionism was now rampant among the private and public work sectors. "In no other industrial nation was corporate management so hostile to the power, or even the existence of trade unionism," as in the United States (Lichtenstein, 2002: 105). Anti-unionist firms have exploded over the ten years prior to the dawning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Studies by Bronfenbrenner and Juravich (2005) found employers use several tactics in anti-union campaigns such as one-on-one meetings, outside consultants and anti-union firms and captive audience meetings.

A hostile federal government greeted unions as President Bush entered the White house at the turn of the century with an anti-union stance that would permeate all working conditions for the next eight years. "President Bush specified that the unionized work force had to become "competitive" with non-unionized workers in wages, benefits and work rules," (Feeley, 2009: 4). This led to a pro-employer atmosphere including expanded collective bargaining that would be filled with concessions and demands by employers and not the workers. "A decades long trend in private-sector labor negotiations has now confirmed collective bargaining as having shifted from demands by workers to demands on workers," (Rosenfeld, 2009: 18). Furthermore, "out of concern for the bottom line, new management prioritizes cost cutting and the workplace becomes a place of rapid change," (Takahashi, 2003: 268). This concern added to competitive pressures influenced U.S. corporations to sacrifice employee interests.

### *Change to Win: Unions Divide*

In December of 2004 trade unionists from across the nation met for a gathering entitled Labor at a Crossroads (Dine, 2008). Political elections, labor rules and an anti-labor government supportive of cost cutting corporatism had created a great fissure in the labor movement. “Although labor had finally admitted it was fighting for its very survival, it voluntarily sacrificed one of the few attributes it still possessed: its unity” (Dine, 2008: 152). They met for nearly a year to discuss defecting from the umbrella union organization, the AFL-CIO. The SEIU, Teamsters, UFCW, Laborers and Unite Here sought to form Change to Win, a new union coalition. These dissident unions were asking for a larger organizing fund and AFL-CIO president John Sweeney to step down. They believed merging smaller unions into larger more powerful unions could enhance their strength against corporations and the government (Schiavone, 2008). On June 15, 2005 the Change to Win coalition became a formal group and stated they would no longer work within the structure of the AFL-CIO (Schiavone, 2008).

This division has not proven to be a miraculous success. Many members feel disgruntled by the coalition’s leaders for not discussing the change (Schiavone, 2008). As exemplified in the Carpenters Union, locals have lost collective bargaining, hiring and organizing power to a hierarchical centralized and dogmatic power to the upper echelons of the Change to win coalition (Schiavone, 2008). The exact problems the Change to Win coalition defected from the AFL-CIO have become a basis for their organization. Centralized power does not pay attention to the local problems for different unions and it ignores the

relationships between unions and employers that have been created over many years of partnership. Therefore, the union division has not been a highly successful structure change.

### ***Politics: Opportunity Becomes Obstacle***

Philip M. Dine's *State of the Unions* (2008) delves deeper into the relationship between politics and union activity. Unions have always had a substantial role in the political sphere such as endorsements, campaigning and getting out the vote. Unions have historically been a pro-Democratic institution (Dine, 2008; Lichtenstein, 2002; Schiavone, 2008; Early 2009). Newspapers cover politics and protests and the unions are considered to be a political social movement (Oliver and Maney, 2000). Newspapers cover the political process into "news holes" which are relatively small and forced into the business section for union political activity (Oliver and Maney, 2000). Political coverage of union activity is a substantial method for newspaper coverage of unions. Oliver and Maney's (2000) theory that news media are a part of politics and part of protest are inextricably intertwined is true of union coverage.

### ***Organizing***

Union organizing has many facets based on the normative actions within the union institution including salary, strikes, contracts, benefits and negotiations. Rosenfeld (2009) sites these as important pieces within the historical context of the American Labor Movement and their continued usage in the pro-labor fight against corporatism. These actions have been designed almost exclusively through unions to create the salaries and working conditions of union members

within their work places. Clawson and Clawson (2000) theorize that these actions have created a bureaucratic oligarchy within unions' social movement institution. Therefore, examining their usage and coverage in newspapers was important to see if there has been any change in their social movement.

Many outside influences and controllers of the labor market have altered the unions of America. Anti-union campaigns, NLRB, immigration and new unions are important to portray the surrounding actions outside of the union institutions. Clawson and Clawson (2000), Morris (2009), Feeley (2009), Waldinger (2008) and other research describes the outside influences upon unions and their effects upon unions. One of the greatest detrimental effects these outside institutions have had on unions is the division of the AFL-CIO in 2005 (Schiavone, 2008; Dine, 2008). The NLRB had also gone through substantial political changes within the Bush tenure that was important in explaining the effect of the anti-union campaigns. Immigrant work rights and unionization are being called means to the revitalization of the American Labor Movement (Milkman, 2000). The institutions outside of unions are examined for their effects on labor relations.

The 2000s began contentious with a disputed election between a sitting Vice President and a conservative governor from a Southern "right to work" state. These "right to work" states defend corporations from accepting any union contracts, negotiations or elections. It is basically against the law for a business to be unionized without the consent of the company while in other states companies can become unionized through employee elections by the NLRB. Unions were



dealt serious blows throughout the Clinton/Gore years with the passages of NAFTA and other trade agreements that weakened unions (Lichtenstein, 2002: 221-222). Once the US Supreme Court decided the election for George W. Bush, the President spent both of his terms to perpetuate the decline of unions started by Republican Presidents thirty years prior. Bush consistently interfered in contract negotiations, left the National Labor Relations Board understaffed, reversed NLRB rulings, and expanded global wage and benefit comparisons publicly. The greatest hit to union's strength would occur in 2005 when the great umbrella organization that represented the majority of unions across America, the AFL-CIO, split into new umbrella factions due to high member dissatisfaction.

### *The Study Continues*

Now that union history has been described what relation does this have to my study? The history of unions is most importantly examined to give the reader a sense of connection to unions. If the information Americans receive is from the popular media outlets such as the New York Times doesn't their coverage shape opinions on the unions? These questions need to be answered for my study to unfold. By further examining supplementary literature relevant to unions and media I can find a concrete base to relate my findings. In order to explain findings and emphasis on the press theory must be included. Theories that surround unions, the press and their connection make the introduction to this study complete.

## CHAPTER TWO

The literature review expands upon the history of unionization in America to include theory. I wanted to know the relationship between unions, the millennium and politics so I choose the George W. Bush Era (2001-2009). If there had been changes in the issues and themes surrounding unions it would most likely be evident in the beginning of the new millennium governed by an anti-labor president. Were the same problems of the past rearing their heads for unions? Were these same problems related to media or Bush? These influences needed to be reviewed and examined to ensure the proper form in describing negative atmosphere for unions. These influences were key components to finding the answer to press representation; we need to first know what the influences were to see what light was shed upon them in articles. These terms such as strikes, negotiations, anti-labor statements would enlighten me as to what terminology was used to describe unions and their actions within the context of the articles. Furthermore, the relationship between press, society and unions were at a breakfront as an anti-labor President would now lead. How was the press affected by these historical terms and actions? How would it be affected with an anti-labor president? Lastly, could historical theory still relate to the union/press relationship?

### ***Fluctuations within press coverage of unions***

Historically, union coverage in the media declined with a reduced amount of articles written on unions over the years. As fewer articles were written on unions, the focal points to describe unions and their actions also changed. As

Bush came into office in 2000, unions were already reeling from changes within their own organizations as well as the American business community. Unions viewed Bush as anti-worker and anti-labor, and perceived the Bush administration as using its power to “attack the labor movement,” (Greenhouse, 2003). Bush had more control over the media than any president before him (Glynn, 2009; Naureckas and Trojan, 2009). Did this have an even greater negative effect on union representation? If the Bush anti-labor administration shaped the press coverage to be favorable to his political goals—the influential spotlight of information for Americans—could the plight of unions be brushed under the rug by changing union representation in the press? But in order to get the full view of unions and the press and politics a historical evaluation would need to be reviewed. The following section allowed both me and the reader to familiarize ourselves with unions and then their historical relationships with politics and press. These excerpts into history gave me a concrete basis to formulate the methodology to assume the research and a more familiar sense of the action that would be presented in the articles I would be reviewing.

### **Politics: Political Opportunity Declines**

This review of politics is essential to understand why it seemed that the media was negative towards unions in regards to the historical relationship unions have with politics and the press. Between a declining union base and an overture of American labor being in fields unprocessed by unions, organizing faded. Lastly, the political prowess of unions faded with the resurgence of the

Republican Party in the 1980s and 1990s in America (Clawson and Clawson, 1999).

Political opportunity for unions had been the backbone of the organizations for many years. Political opportunities include endorsements from a large number of unions that would mobilize their members to vote for certain candidates (Dine, 2008). These same members would also prove to be a formidable army in getting out the vote and voter registration drives (Dine, 2008; Schiavone, 2008; Clawson and Clawson 1999). But as unions had been known for pushing their own members to the polls to support candidates and throw millions of dollars into mass marketing for campaigns (Dine, 2008). But these attempts didn't seem to help as much as campaigns changed during the 50 year decline of unions. The majority of union members were now not as politically involved, many times not knowing what their party platform or union was endorsing (Clawson and Clawson, 1999).

Although the beginnings, decline, and potential revitalization of labor unions in the United States is well-researched and documented (Fantasia and Voss 2004; Schiavone 2008; Dine 2008; Milkman 2000; Martin 2004; Voss and Sherman 2000; Lichtenstein 2002; Clawson and Clawson 1999; Goddard 2009), there is a dearth of research on the ways in which labor unions are depicted in newsprint media. Schiavone (2008) and Lichtenstein (2002) discuss how and why there was a steady decline of American unionism from its height in the 1950s, (Dine 2008; Lichtenstein 2002; Goddard 2009) to its decline by elements including technological changes, lack of organizing and lost political opportunity.

There were both outside and inside influences that changed unions throughout its history in the United States over the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Those outside influences that will be discussed include technological changes including automation and trade changes due to globalization. Inside influences include bureaucratization of unions and a strong formation of anti-unionization by corporations.

In the next few pages, I explore each of these influences and connect these concepts to my understanding of issues and themes within union press representation. The knowledge of these concepts allows me to delve further into terms that will be used within the context of union newspaper articles. Knowledge of these issues and such is the beginning of this project. Therefore, the road to my answers is led first by understanding unions as a whole.

### ***Unions and the Press***

The purpose of my study is to conduct a content analysis of the print media (i.e., the press), specifically of the New York Times, to measure the topics of discussion and the level of positive or negative statements about unions during the Bush presidency between 2001-2009. One of the most interesting elements is the historical insignificance that unions play in the newspaper media. Joe Bekken (2005) has examined this issue at some length especially from the view of journalistic methods of teaching. He believes as does Philip M. Dine (2008), Puette (1992), Martin (2004), Kumar (2001) and Carriero (2005) that union activity goes largely ignored by the print media. Kumar's 2001 study on the UPS strikes, Earl et.al (2004) work on description bias in press reporting and Carriero's (2005) study on inclusion of anti-union firings coverage in the press were

supportive works in the discussion and implementation of this study. These works were important in framing the lack of support that media normally has for union activities in a comparison to the type of coverage and elements covered within the study. These studies also lay the groundwork for the reasons behind such a small amount of available articles within the study.

### ***New Political Changes in the Press***

According to Glynn (2009) President George W. Bush turned the media into a personal public relations outlet. These changes further endangered union coverage in the press due to his stance against labor (Feeley, 2009). The Bush White House had intimidated the media into broadcasting his messages and even created fake media and bought conservative commentators to push his policy (Glynn, 2009). The members of the Bush press corps were specially selected by conservative leaders within the White House so their views would be better related to that of the president (Glynn, 2009). The “Bush White House has made a more systematic effort to mobilize the management and control of images as a primary mode of governance than any other U.S. presidency,” (Glynn, 2009: 217). This effort was focused on giving the media only the images and information that would make a positive impression of Bush, his administration and decisions. He revoked many of the press privileges during his presidency (Naureckas and Trojan, 2009). These revocations allowed control of media messages that were relayed to the public to maintain the image of a well-balanced government that was working for and not against the needs of the public (Glynn, 2009). This power over the media is an example of agenda setting influence upon

the media. My tentative hypothesis that union coverage in the press was mostly negative can be best explained with theories surrounding agenda setting as a staple of political control of media messages. In order to substantiate my tentative claim the theoretical framework within the media messages surrounding unions can be connected to the Bush White House's use of media control. Once this has been established the reader will have a greater grasp as to why and how the Bush era was particularly targeted for this project. These changes within the press and political leadership further alienated unions and the press during the Bush era.

### **Relational Theories**

A study based upon press coverage of a certain organization needs to be anchored in a historical context true to the press as an organization and its inner workings. In order to find the structure of press coverage related to unions the history and development of the press is needed. The following theories and studies are used to give a clear view of press coverage in order to examine it properly. Having a definite base on the means to the ends of press coverage supports the hypothetical statement that the press's coverage on unions was negative during the Bush Era.

Theories built upon agenda setting and media framing support the in-depth content analysis of this study. Agenda setting is the key to the timeline of this study. As the political agenda of America turned to a more Republican Party Platform base would the press coverage also change? As Bush began a new millennium with a new agenda for America the press would surely be more negative towards a pro-Democratic Party Platform issue like unions. The press

relates images and stories based upon actions and elements within American life. The articles within a paper are mere reflections of this. Would the agenda setting of newspapers be linked to agenda setting of politics and everyday life that would change due to new and different leadership?

The following theories and studies are used to explain press coverage in order to examine it properly. Marshall McLuhan (McLuhan, 1968, as cited by Mulder, 2006) termed newspaper coverage as “The medium is the message.” This statement suggests that the media control what information the public is to receive and, similarly, what it doesn’t receive. Burkean theory on media further describes this phenomenon as a means of media framing theory (Ceren, 2009). Furthermore, “agenda setting theory strongly suggests that citizens are heavily influenced by the media, holding views on salience that correlates strongly to the prioritization of those issues on media agendas,” (Ceren, 2009). Newspaper coverage in a positive manner for unions has an abundant affect on people’s attitudes. This can occur with any type of organization or event. Unions are the example that this study is focused upon. Therefore, agenda setting controls press coverage to mediate a certain view to the public. This agenda setting can also have a reverse affect in the tone and manner organizations and events are covered to express the view of the public. The people interviewed in an article such as a union representative can propagate the view of the union members. Agenda setting is a theory on connecting what type of press coverage there was in the Bush Era.



### ***Framing Analysis and Agenda Setting***

The hypothesis of the study, during the Bush Era press coverage of unions would be negative, is best researched through exploring press article framing. Framing is where the terms, influences, issues and tone of an article are best exemplified and analyzed (Ceren, 2009). Framing analysis is a tool researchers use to enlighten themselves on the structure of a press article. When an article is delved into deeper like a content analysis the framing of the article is seen more clearly such as a negative or positive representation of the parties involved in the coverage. My study employs framing theory when the language within the articles were extracted and separated into issues and themes. It enabled me to use language to see if there was more use of anti-union terms that could support my hypothesis.

Framing theory is the collection of several theories on media messages and representation. It is a part of another theory: agenda setting (Ceren, 2009). Agenda setting further frames a story by the amount of information in a story and the position of a story which is pertinent to answering my question (Ceren, 2009). As mentioned earlier “framing influences how audiences think about issues” (Ceren, 2009). According to a study done by Kahneman and Tversky “positively and negatively coded words can dramatically change risk perceptions and cause subjects to act in non-gaining or risk-minimizing ways” (Ceren, 2009). Unions as well as the general audiences will perceive union actions not only from the words that are incorporated into a story but the actions of the unions. Agenda setting theory incorporates the framing of an issue in an article or any media. Agenda

setting takes the manner that an issue is framed such as is the article based upon actions of an organization (strikes, protests). The theory is then used to formulate what the article is attempting to represent and how it is represented. Framing theory analyzes the players and actions in an article; agenda setting analyzes and decides what they represent. Agenda setting is a formula to decide if the coverage of an article is part of a larger format of an organization to broadcast their views. The work by Glynn (2009) stated that the Bush White House used the media to propagate their political agenda for the public through their manner of controlling the press. Agenda setting for unions is similar in the unions could use their representatives, quotes and actions to publicize their view of corporate piracy for the public. The sentence-by-sentence structure of an article is a better analysis of agenda setting as the views of the organizations, press and action coverage combine to allow readers and researchers to see if an agenda is utilized in coverage.

Lastly, conflict resolution theory (Shin, et al., 2005) will be discussed. The theory was framed in that the newspapers are a public space for the union conflict. Journalists, press owners, politicians and unions are all vying for their message to be included in newspaper articles. This type of competition can be related to conflict theory. Their conflict is then covered and its coverage can be negative or positive to unions. All of these theories and history supported the creation of my methodology. They are the structural functions to my path to find the answer to my hypothesis of negative press coverage for unions.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

My study was based upon a curious notion that newspaper coverage of unions was negative during the Bush Administration, 2001-2009. As a union member I always felt that media coverage was based upon their perception that union members received extravagant salaries in relationship to the work that we actually did. This seemed to be a main theme that my union colleagues and I believed flourished during the Bush Administration. In order to find the answers regarding questions on media and union relationship a strong content analysis was needed. A content analysis allows researchers to view and analyze articles in several manners. A content analysis is the most proficient and appropriate means to form an in-depth press study structure using grounded theory. In a content analysis there does not have to be prior figures or participants such as field research studies. Holton (2010) supports the strength of content analysis stating that an open coding process like grounded theory can “employ conceptual level coding from the outset of the open coding process.” Content analysis and grounded theory accentuated each other for this study. A content analysis enabled the extraction of information that may confuse the overall message of an article. A sentence-by-sentence and terminology based content analysis allowed the separation of elements within an article including: factual statements, representatives of unions, corporations or government and any entertaining information. It’s as if the content analysis removed the subterfuge surrounding the real issue of positive or negative coverage. The study utilized content analysis

of terms and sentence-by-sentence deciphering for a broader degree of support for any findings.

I choose the New York Times because it is a nationally based newspaper for the United States. I yielded 120 articles by searching the NYT databases for articles with American unions in the headlines within the Bush administration from 2001-2009. Further refinement to exclude opinion, op-eds, advertisements, and international unions yielded 88 articles. All 88 articles were included in the content analysis.

I worked under the assumption that the New York Times would have broad coverage across the United States because of its strong national and international presence. It also has one of the few union journalists. After searching NYT, I found a plethora of articles that were related to unions across America involved in an extensive amount of activities. I separated the articles by year. I created the first part of my content analysis on the terminology accorded to the union based articles and divided them into themes and issues. The first part of my content analysis model was a determinant for discovering who, what, where, why and how of American union activity during the focused time frame by choosing defined terms related to unions within articles. This study was based upon a well-rounded, national perspective on unions in America.

### ***Conceptualization***

The study focused upon the frequency of articles to determine the relative importance the press relates in coverage toward American unions. My tentative hypothesis was that as unions declined in America their press coverage should

decline as well. This exclusivity included a deeper insight into what type of coverage unions would receive due to the strong anti-union stance of the Bush administration. I wondered if the Bush administration's anti-union stance appeared in the articles written in the New York Times during his presidency.

The first part of the content analysis based on terminology was sequenced into two categories: union issues and organizing themes. They were organized into an Excel database that listed the union issues and organizing themes. The union issues were: pay increase and decrease, medical benefits, negotiations, working conditions, strikes, pension and NLRB. These were chosen for their historical definition as union issues. The organizing themes were: anti-unionism, new unions, job expansion, union expansion, union division, pledge cards, contracts and NLRB. These were chosen for their historical definition as union organizing issues and influences.

This spreadsheet of union issues and organizing themes identified terms by frequency of subject. I divided each theme, issue, industry, union and concept into categories and grouped by color-coding. I counted the presence of each theme once per mention per article and per year, and I did not count for the frequency of mention within an article. I felt that multiple mentions would skew the results from the focus of the study which was to find if either theme or issue is mentioned. If they are mentioned just once then the article was following the historical context of union representation. For example, if AFL-CIO was an organizing theme that was mentioned multiple times in an article, I counted it as present in the article, and marked the Excel spreadsheet as the theme being

present. They were separated to determine the activity within each year for issues that are inherent to the union industries. These were deemed the issues unions were negotiating in contracts or complaining they were losing. These issues were then separated into two sub-categories: issues and organizing. These categories allowed me to observe patterns for each year and the articles placement as negative and positive.

In the second part of the content analysis, I wanted to measure the positive or negative tone of articles. The content analysis determined if there was a bias within media coverage of American union activity for the focused time frame. Each sentence of each article is examined to determine if it is a positive, negative or neutral statement about unions. In order to create the analysis I read each article once. Then I re-read the article and coded each sentence positive, neutral or negative. Each quote is counted separately. I counted the positive, negative or neutral sentences for each article. Then separated into an excel spreadsheet and counted for the amount each contained for each article and for each year.

I operationalized a sentence as positive using several criteria. First, the sentence may state the union as a positive entity or activity. An example is when unions were fighting for contracts during the airline industry financial meltdown if a sentence stated that unions were agreeing to concessions to support the airlines it was determined as positive. Second, I coded as positive if a sentence states that unions are actively participating in politics as this is a union strength. Several manners qualified a positive statement for unions such as the power of unions within political campaigns. Unions equating with power is positive due to

the strong influence unions have on the voting class. Furthermore, any statement by another about unions in a positive light like supporting working people or creating better working conditions was a qualifier. Statements about unions taking on more responsibility in their realm to agree to concessions or new better working methods for corporations were qualified. They showed a positive compromise by unionists. Historically, as can be supported in Chapters One and Two, strengths within unions are positive if they can bring strength to their membership in political influence and pro-member corporate negotiations.

Negative statements were qualified by anti-union statements by people. Also qualifying were any statements in which unions harmed the economy, businesses, people or employees. An example is statements by observers that unions refused concessions, working conditions or contracts. These statements were interpreted as unions harming the economy by not accepting corporate cost cutting concessions. Statements or articles that mentioned the historical fraud that flourished within unions is negative. Anti-union statements by the government or corporations were deemed negative. Negative qualifiers were determined within context of statements and quotes.

Neutral statements were sentences that were fact-based only, and did not make any statement about unions that can be measured as positive or negative as per the operationalization of the above variables. In addition, they did not include an opinion or stated dislike or like of unions. They may be quotes or article statements that did not pertain to union specifics but to the articles core

discussion. A neutral qualifier was a sentence that did not include any relevance to unions. These sentences may discuss other aspects of the article.

The two-part system of content analysis would also help support or challenge the major theories surrounding media coverage: media framing, agenda setting and “medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1968, as cited by Mulder, 2006; Ceren, 2009), which are important in understanding the relationship between media messages and public perception of unions.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### ***History Meets Theory***

I was expecting to find that this project was going to be a very arduous task believing that there would be a great number of articles on unions in the New York Times due to its broad coverage nationally. But I soon found that Joe Bekken's (2005) research on journalistic representation of unions was true of unions and the press: there was a complete decline in the number of articles from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century including a further decline in the Era time period of this study. Coverage of labor stories decreased from 220 articles per year in 1946 to fewer than 30 in 1985, and currently between 6-10 per year in the New York Times for the past ten years (Bekken, 2005: 74-75). There has been a substantial change in journalistic teaching methods as well. Journalists are taught to ignore union activity unless they can frame it as anti-prosperous actions against corporations and the economy (Bekken, 2005). Newspaper coverage as well as other forms of media is controlled by several factors including ownership and political influences, as well as message framing which includes agenda setting and media framing.

Another key component in deciding scope, depth, and newsworthiness of coverage on union news stories is through "agenda setting" (Ceren, 2009). This is when the media alters "the public's perception of an issue through selective coverage of either the issue or its attributes," (Ceren, 2009). Agenda setting is used by politicians and corporations to publicize their view of unions. This is possible when press representatives frame the articles through public relations

information from politicians or corporations. Agenda setting can also be used by unions in the manner in which they frame their actions and unionist goals to journalists. Corporate advertisers are the primary income (newspapers make most of their money from advertisements) for newspapers, and in turn, would expect mostly positive press to meet their business and personal positions (Martin, 2004). Corporate needs are more based upon low labor wages. In other words, corporations which own the newspapers want their papers to cover stories that fit their agenda. The stories in the paper need to cover corporations not unions in a positive light per corporate agenda setting of the press. They want the articles to sound like unions are greedy for asking for pay increases instead of corporations being greedy for wanting to pay low wages. So I figured by corporate ownership strength union coverage would be skewed toward the company policies which are anti union. A low number of articles can be inferred as an element making this statement true. I utilized agenda setting theory which is based on the corporate hegemony model of control of media (Earl, et al, 2004). The corporate agenda or program is based on the content of articles being more corporate policy on employment, wages and working conditions. It may also include the use of more corporate representative's quotes and interviews versus union representatives (Bekken, 2005). Agenda setting can be used as a tool to examine how press corporations control the representation of events such as union activities. This agenda-setting is a key theory for content analysis as it is constructed in a framework that gives key details as to what to look for in newspaper coverage. This could also be an incidental reason for the low number of articles. Agenda

setting is a theory that supports finding a public relations like framing of either the corporate or public's view of a situation in the press. The theory helps to structure and simplify the content of articles. Agenda setting is the lens used to analyze an article.

### **Bush's First Term Results**

In Bush's first term (2001), I found an average of 14 articles on unions per year with the lowest number being in 2004 with only 9 articles. Even more interesting was that out of the few articles in 2004, none were coded for Politics theme. This was peculiar for an election year especially with the historical significance of unions and political campaigns. According to Glynn (2009), control of the media had already been taken by Bush and his administration leaving the press little leverage to publish articles that were not perceived as pro-Bush administration. Bush being the anti-labor leader had an immense effect, theoretically and actively, on setting the agenda for press coverage as discussed in the literature review. In expanding on this theory press is owned and controlled by corporations and shareholders. According to Glynn (2009) the Bush administration had control of the press by using agenda setting in all White House media. Agenda setting can be used as a tool to examine how press corporations control the representation of news events such as union activities. If the leaders within the corporate press administration are pro Bush they can control what their journalists publish. Agenda setting is based on the type of information from the core organization that is being presented to the press. The press then manipulates the story to either be a public outlet for the views of an organization.

This theory is utilized to a great extent for press relations with any organization or person in the public or private which is covered. The theory is a means to understand the coverage of the press and its relationship as a public relations outlet. These are a couple of theories related to why coverage was low and lacking key components of an election year.

The highest year for articles on unions was 2002 with 20 published articles. During that year, the majority of articles revolved around the fallout of September 11<sup>th</sup> on the airline industry when the airlines struggled with union negotiations on cost savings of labor in response to plummeting profits and warding off bankruptcy. The articles focused primarily on the consumer-side of the airline industry, providing stories from the airline industry's perspective that airline tickets would increase in price and ticketholders would be inconvenienced if airline unions were to strike. The twenty articles rarely mentioned the concessions that union employees were already taking or the high number of layoffs that had already occurred since the turn to the 21st Century. This was further evidence to support "agenda setting," as the articles inferred that unions were asking for pay increases during an economic downturn. Agenda setting theory inferred articles presented unions that were fighting back concessions like pay decreases and medical benefits cuts as being greedy. This theory inferred that the articles that were related to the airline industry presented unions as asking the airlines to increase ticket prices because they wouldn't take pay cuts. The union members are harming the economy by not wanting their benefits cut. This is a perfect example of agenda setting as the agenda or view of the articles was

skewed toward unions being anti-consumer. Martin (2004) examines the role of consumerism as an antagonistic element between unions, corporations, politicians and newspapers. Kumar (2001) evidenced this same thought when he covered the UPS strike in 1997. He stated that “the interests of labor are subordinated to those of corporations,” (Kumar, 2001: 286). Kumar continues using Michael Parenti (1986) that “the impact on the economy and the inconvenience to the public is highlighted, while little is said about the deeper causes of strikes,” (Parenti, 1986 as cited by Kumar, 2001: 286). The coverage within articles in 2002 supported the belief that unions were represented as anti-consumer. Theoretical evidence supports the press presented union activity in the guise of creating obstacles to consumer production and increasing prices.

### **Bush's Second Term Results**

In the second term (2005-2009) articles decreased further from 56 to 32 published. The mean average of 8 articles spanning the term would be a cut of almost 50% compared to the first terms mean of 14. Why would articles decrease so considerably? In considering the actions within American unions at the time coverage was low. Unions were splitting their umbrella group, the AFL-CIO, more cases were sent to the NLRB during this time and all the outside influences negatively affecting unions were still growing. Globalization was in full throttle so why so few articles? During Bush's second term the Iraq/Afghanistan War and the economy may have been stronger influences on the media. The recession began in the third year of Bush's second term and there was heated unrest over the war by this time. Issues such as these and corporate hegemony over the press

may have been the greatest indicators for low coverage. The only way to find the exact answer would be to compare the news in all of the New York Times but that may be done at another time.

### ***Focus of the Project Emphasized***

The focus of this project was to find if press coverage of unions was negative during the Bush presidency. What is significant is that research shows, Bekken (2005), Dine (2008) and Glynn (2009), that newspaper articles were continually decreasing for unions over the last century and the trend continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The substance of these articles, even though the number is low, was pertinent to the hypothesis. The activities presented and the tone of the presentation that was published was the deciding factors to my hypothesis. Each word and sentence counted toward a justification for either a positive or negatively based article. The first set of findings would be a terminology based content analysis utilizing the articles on unions within the New York Times. These articles were chosen during the Bush era for two reasons: he was considered very anti labor and the millennial effect on unions would be interesting.

Supportive evidence including Kumar's 2001 study on the UPS strikes relationship with media coverage was only further proof that mass print media frames unions as anti-economy or obstacles for the economy to flow forth. This is an example of description bias in which an article is created to erroneously report a story that is one-sided (Earl et al., 2004). According to Earl et al, (2004) there is a body of research in which the labor movement or unions stories are

portrayed in an “unfavorable light.” Carriero’s (2005) anti-union firings relationship with media coverage further exemplifies that print media does not follow through or thoroughly investigate or cover union intensive stories.

The results of the first part of the content analysis appeared to be aligned with popular research. The major themes and issues emerged from the articles in an inductive method. As I read and reread each article I began to familiarize myself with the terms. These elements enlightened me on the current events in union activities and the means to their press coverage. As part of a thick description of union press coverage many of these issues needed to be included for validity. If an article did not discuss union activities such as negotiations, NLRB, political activity, concessions, strikes and the like than the article was not relevantly focused upon unions. Each of the articles chosen was relevant due to the inclusion of these terms. These terms are historically connected to unions and their representation in the media. A proper article on unions will comprise elements ranging from strikes to anti-labor terminology. As a content analysis the study first was based on the appearance of these terms within an article. The historical and significant terms need to be included. Secondly, these terms will support the in-depth research per sentence to formalize what may be a positive or negative sentence. Therefore, the history of unions should be continued within media cover as this is a means of the message. The messages within the articles regarding unions supported my content analysis methodology.

These articles were also separated between organizing and union issues to further examine the role of mass media in union activities. “The ideal role of the

mass media under a democracy is to enable an informed citizenry to make decisions for the collective good,” (Kumar, 285). Furthermore, these questions needed to be answered to discover the meanings of the coverage.

**Comparison of Issues and Themes**

Table 1 presents the most and least frequent terms on union organizing for 2001-2009. The appearance of these terms intertwines with frame setting and agenda setting media theories because the most and least frequented issues are indicators of the topics the press focus upon in their union coverage. These terms set the framework for the tone of the articles as well as the presentation of unions. The terminology framed the articles language and the conveyance of a media message for the union article (Ceren, 2009). These terms are referred in the articles for the focus of the article. That is the bread and butter for agenda setting.

**Table 1: Most and Least Frequent Issues and Themes in Articles Per Year During the Bush Administration, 2001-2008**

Years	Most Frequent In Organizing	Least Frequent in Organizing
2001 (n=17)	Anti-union 41.2% (7)	Union division and Job Expansion 5.9% (1)
2002 (n=10)	Anti-union 30.0% (3)	Union division 0.0% (0)
2003 (n=20)	Job expansion and new unions 20.0% (4) each	Job expansion, union division & pledge cards 5.0% (1)
2004 (n=9)	Union division 77.8% (7)	Union expansion 0.0% (0)
2005 (n=9)	New union 66.7% (6)	Job expansion and pledge cards 0.0% (0)
2006 (n=10)	New union 40.0% (4)	Blocked contract 0.0% (0)
2007 (n=6)	Anti-union 50.0% (3)	Pledge cards and NLRB 0.0% (0)
2008 (n=7)	Union expansion 42.9% (3)	Pledge cards and NLRB 0.0% (0)

NOTE: The percentages are based on the amount of articles which issue was mentioned one time and combined for total amount of times for each year.



New unions and union expansion were the most frequent terms for the articles in the organizing category (Table 1), suggesting newspapers had a more positive tone for unions in the articles. At least half of the Bush Era newspapers covered union expansion in articles from 20-66.7% of the time (Table 1). An explanation for this positive result is the SEIU had created many new unions throughout the service industry. They had begun community unionization, which created alliances between unions and community activists and organizations to thrust companies to unionize. Many of these companies were service sector industrialists with high immigrant populations. This heavy activism drew the press to union organizations or events as stated in Earl, et al.'s (2004) study on newspapers and collective action.

As with any media, the press is drawn to activity which many people are involved because they may get these people plus the people around them like friends and relatives to buy the paper to read this particular story. It's a free means to advertising. As witnessed in the articles in this study, during this part of Bush's tenure there were many large protest events by unions occurring in New York City. Earl et al. (2004, 69) believe that newspaper journalists will cover activities in closer "proximity to the news agency" is true of this study. A large portion of the news articles were based on activities or actions for New York unions. The press presented positive terminology of unions in the study's articles based on previous research. These positive changes within unions may be seen by focusing upon these terms.

To delve deeper into what type of overall coverage was given to unions for most organizing terminology, new unions/union expansion is 20% of the articles compared to 15% for anti-union articles (Numbers based on Table 1 and amount of articles in the study, 88). That meaning there was only a 5% difference in the amount of articles for either view which is a relatively low number. Overall, either of these views only controlled 35% of the entire study meaning many other activities were covered in the press. That being said there was another 65% of the articles mentioning different organizing terminology (numbers based on percentage subtraction from original 88 articles). It was deemed that the press through an organizing terminology based content analysis is more positive for the Bush Era. The balance in the terminology between the most and least used organizing terminology has a positive approach to unions within media framing. In order to see if this balance can be further understood and seen lets delve into the second chart that deals with most and least utilized issue terminology.

**Table 2: Comparison of Union Issues over Bush Era 2001-2008, Per Article and Year**

Years	Most Frequent in Issues	Least Frequent in Issues
2001 (n=17)	Pay increase 29.4% (5)	Pay decrease 0.0% (0)
2002 (n=10)	Negotiations 30.0% (3)	NLRB 0.0% (0)
2003 (n=20)	Medical benefits 20.0% (4)	Strikes 0.5% (1)
2004 (n=10)	Working conditions 10.0% (1)	Pay increase 0.0% (0)
2005 (n=9)	Pay increase 33.3% (3)	Pension 0.0% (0)
2006 (n=10)	Pay increase and medical benefits 30.0% (3) each	Working conditions 0.0% (0)
2007 (n=6)	Medical benefits, working conditions and strikes 33.3% (2) each	Pay decrease and pensions 0.0% (0) each
2008 (n=7)	Medical benefits 57.7% (4)	Working conditions 0.0% (0)

**NOTE:** The percentages are based on the amount of articles which issue was mentioned one time and combined for total amount of times for each year.

Issues surrounding unions convey the non-active or business side of unions such as their role as labor representatives. Unions are an institution for members-American workers-and the issues they defend are working rights. The terminology issues are important to realize the job duties and benefits defended or represented by unions and how they are expressed as focuses in the press. The press relied upon the representation of medical benefits the most for union issues in the eight year span of articles with it being mentioned in four out of eight year span (Table 2). Medical benefits when mentioned were 20-57.7% of issues mentioned in a year of articles (Table 2). That was a high percentage especially due to the small amount of 88 articles for the entire study. This coincided with the uproar in the public over the lack of medical coverage for Americans. The unions were using their institution and actions to represent the American people and issues very pertinent to them. They are covered in the press as activists. Activists are a positive entity as they create positive change for medical benefits. Of course, this would not be evident until present day with the Obama administrations enactment of government medical benefits for all. The use of this terminology inferred a positive agenda setting frame for unions in the press. The unions and their members were also active in the shrinking medical coverage of Americans. A union fighting for medical benefits just like other Americans was deemed positive.

Pay increases were the second highest issue having been mentioned 29.4-33.3% (Table 2). But in union media representation pay increase and wages are normally negative (Martin, 2004). Unions monetary demands like pay increase

are publicly viewed as anti-consumer (Martin, 2004 and Panagopoulos and Francia, 2008). According to scholars, consumers will associate union member pay increase with higher prices for consumer goods. The increase of wages was prevalent in the study but the decrease in wages due to contract concessions was not (Table 2). As a result, the union representation of issues appeared to be on a more negative note due to wages. The agenda setting and framework for the union articles in the issue category appeared negative. The framing by using negative terminology portrays union issues as anti-consumer. The framework of the articles also appeared to show trends. The trends that were framed over the Bush Era for most frequent issues vs. the least frequent seemed to create an imbalance in the positive coverage. At the same time that the least frequently focused issues were pay decrease the same pay increase would be the most frequent (Table 2).

At the same time that medical benefits were abundant working conditions would be least mentioned (Table 2). The imbalance of these two issues would coincide for least and most for three years. The negative terminology has a stronger presence in the study (Table 2). Therefore, to show some type of trend in the press agenda setting of union articles was imbalanced. Coincidentally, this imbalance was inferred as negatively representing working conditions in favor of a more mainstream trend as medical benefits. In order to delve deeper into union issues particular comparisons would need to be made. The following table is a great example of how certain organizing and issues terminology were set opposite of each other in the press coverage's framework.

**Comparing Issues: Union vs. Anti-union**

Political activity which never reached higher than 50% of articles especially during 2004 is part of the decline of union press coverage (Table 3). Corporate America has a strained relationship with unions making any anti-labor or anti-union terminology in press articles important (Bekken, 2002). As unions moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, an anti-union force met them under the leadership of Bush and changes in the marketplace. These changes within the history of unions offer us a way to understand where unions are today, and perhaps what significance they will play in labor in the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**Table 3: Frequency of Issues Mentioned in Articles in Comparison to Anti-Union Tactics, By Article Per Year**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Anti-union</b>	<b>National Labor Relations Board</b>	<b>Union Division</b>	<b>Politics</b>	<b>N</b>
2001	41.2% (7)	17.6% (3)	5.9% (1)	11.8%(2)	17
2002	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.00% (0)	10.0%(1)	10
2003	20.0 % (3)	10.0% (2)	5.0% (1)	35.0%(7)	20
2004	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	77.8% (7)	0.0% (0)	9
2005	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2%(2)	9
2006	30.0% (3)	10.0% (1)	20.0% (2)	30.0%(3)	10
2007	50.0% (3)	16.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	50.0%(3)	6
2008	14.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (1)	42.9%(3)	7

**NOTE: The percentages are based on the amount of articles which issue was mentioned one time and combined for total amount of times for each year.**

Table 3 exemplifies the change in the political atmosphere for unions with low political activity and high union division. As Dine (2008) witnessed organized labor needed to create grassroots campaigns in political races to ensure a higher number of pro-labor voters. Union clout had diminished in political campaigns that hurt their opportunity to be represented more strongly in the legislature evident in the low political activity which was only mentioned 22.2-50.0% per year (Table 3). This was negative as unions have normally used

political connections and networking to influence labor laws in America (Schiavone, 2008).

Politics were a major harbinger of misfortune for unions with the double election of Bush and his anti-labor actions and intentions. The power of the Republican Party and President Bush would be too much for unions to handle. Starting during the Reagan era, Republicans have increased their vigor against unions with Right to Work States increasing throughout the years. These states do not abide by the NLRB sanctions for union organizing and expansion (Lichtenstein, 2002). Many of these states which are led by Republican dominated politicians have fought against unions. There has been a “long term Republican Party goal of denying the right of federal employees to join unions” which has spread to all unions (Fantasia and Voss, 2004: 163). A fierce blow is sent to unions’ national image against corporations when federal employees can be restrained from creating unions. This new leadership was a critical point for my research as it would be my guide to answering my own questions on unions, press and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The lack of political topics (Table 3) in press coverage for unions that I studied in this thesis adheres to the changes that historians have relayed.

The use of this terminology assumes the condescension of corporate views on unions into the public sphere. Terminology usage is a main ingredient for the agenda setting theory which I used to analysis the press. A content analysis is made stronger by analyzing the exact content of the articles. The terminology not only creates a stronger content analysis it further connects the study to historical

trends in unions and the press. All of these are needed to form a good content analysis. According to union history reflected by Nissen, “changes in market and technological conditions have induced U.S. employees to abandon industrial relations practices inherited from the 1930s and 1940s” supporting unions to a “marginalization of unions” in the present day (Nissen, 2003: 135). This statement by Nissen is evident in press coverage. Table 3 illustrates that anti-union terms and union division were both used more frequently than any positive terms (Table 3). Anti-union and union division was mentioned almost 2-3 times more per year (Table 3). Anti-union terminology mentioned per article per year is between 11.1-55.6% comparatively, the NLRB is only mentioned 0-33.3% (Table 3). This particular issue is still prevalent in unions so the article is a stronger contender to be examined for union issues.

This historical issue is compared to union political activity due to the corporate/union power struggle for political strength. Corporations and unions struggle over the “lack of institutional norms and hence government policies recognizing union representation as a democratic right,” (Godard, 2009: 99-100). This power struggle has enabled corporations to decrease union employment therefore union strength. This was evidenced in the articles by using a term based content analysis. Anti-union campaign terms weaken the positive attributes press coverage could have on unions.

As in all political campaigns and advertising, negativity seems to attract more people. Tables 1, 2, and 3 described the terminology and focus upon articles for the entire Bush Era. The results suggested that anti-labor terminology

was used to a more extensive degree during his second term. In 2005 anti-union was in 55.6% of the articles per year, 2006 it was in 30.0% of the articles and in 2007 it was in 50.0% of the articles (Table 3). Between 2001 and 2004 it barely reached 42% for the high of any year (Table 3). As the years progressed the issues flipped in usage with union political activity gaining more coverage (Table 3). Union political activity increased in articles from 0-35.0% in his first term to 22.2-50.0% of in his second term (Table 3). There was an equal amount of anti-union and union political activity terms mentioned, 30.0% for 2005 and 50.0% for 2006 (Table 3). This equal result may pertain to higher political activity by the new unions which were formed after the AFL-CIO broke apart in 2005 (Schiavone, 2008; Dine, 2008). Since this information contradicted my hypothesis a further comparison would be needed.

### ***The NLRB vs. Anti-unionism***

In order to delve further into what created positive or negative press coverage I compared the usage of more terms and infer a relationship. Table 3 suggested that by comparing anti-unionism to pro-union issues there could be a relationship tested for my hypothesis on whether press coverage is negative for unions. If the content of the articles is filled with more negative terms than positive terms for unions than that part of the content analysis would mean negative press coverage. The NLRB is the government panel which defends unions, their members and union expansion. In the first year of the Bush Era anti-union campaign is strong, it was mentioned 41.2%, and so is use of the NLRB, it was mentioned 17.6%, in articles suggesting that the press was balancing negative



and positive aspects for union coverage (Table 3). If the NLRB is mentioned it means that unions are being represented against corporations for work violations.

The NLRB is a positive attribute for unions as it is a defense. In 2005 the second highest year for anti-union campaign coverage when it's found in 55.6% of articles, the NLRB received its greatest coverage ,33.3%, again suggesting that the fight between the unions and corporations was interesting to the media (Table 3). The use of the NLRB is further important due to the general lack of NLRB coverage in newspapers (Carriero, 2005). Beyond this during the Bush Era vacancies on the NLRB, overturned pro-union cases and reversal of standard union wage policies would suggest that the NLRB was under fire (Labor Law Journal: Fall 2005 and Spring 2009). Therefore, to see these two issues comparatively suggested that the press coverage for unions and its alliances was balanced for these years. So, neither a negative or positive relationship between the two issues can be conferred for my hypothesis. Even though anti-union is more frequented than NLRB for each year the struggle for coverage of the NLRB suggested its mention is monumental.

### ***Union Division***

Another monumental finding due to its high coverage is union division. The repetitive usage of union division suggested the press was focusing upon more negative actions within the union atmosphere. Union division weakened the American union's leadership, membership and power within the corporate community. This division splintered their power base diminishing their overall power. The intense coverage of a weakened union was negative for the above

reasons. The three aspects, anti-union, NLRB and union division, appear to be intertwined throughout the time period suggesting that Bush's and the corporate power over the press was powerful. The coverage of anti-union and union division was both higher than the pro-union defense machine, the NLRB (Table 3). This type of coverage with higher numbers for issues which weaken unions is negative. A further examination is next.

One of the more interesting findings from this research, as listed in Table 3, was in 2004, most of the articles covered union division, being mentioned in 77.8% of articles and 0.0% included unions' involvement in politics. This year the union umbrella, AFL-CIO, would start negotiating to divide into another union umbrella organization, Bush would be working to be re-elected so why such a low number for anti-union? Unions were crumbling under infighting to split the major umbrella organizations (which would affect unions of every kind across America and the world) so their political activity should have been higher. The union split was also viewed by researchers as an exceedingly destructive decision that would weaken unions further (Dine, 2008 and Schiavone, 2008). This coverage is negative especially because union political activity (which has always been deemed strength for unions) would not be included as a balance issue in coverage.

The following background paints a picture of declining union support thrust against an anti-union campaign by not just business but the President's administration. The appearance of union division as a high percentage during Bush's Era can be deemed a negative element within coverage. The greatest hit

to union's strength would occur in 2005 when the great umbrella organization that represented the majority of unions across America, the AFL-CIO, split into new umbrella factions due to high member dissatisfaction. As of 2009, unions were 12.4% of the working population by a comparison of over 35% in the 1950s (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010). The historical strength of unions was now obsolete as changes within the marketplace would render them seemingly useless. There were many battles within the unions themselves: infighting over the direction of the union's resources, political weaknesses, governmental exodus and a weakened legal position for unions created negative influences for organizations already in decline.

The findings are strengthened when linked to the historical and then present state of unions. These findings can best be examined by providing previously studied insight into the surroundings of unions at this time. Inside the union atmosphere more destructive forces were at hand such as business unionism (Voss and Sherman, 2000: 305). Unions were created through the large mobilization of thousands of members across the United States and globe with the intention of their numbers gaining strength against anti-worker practices (Schiavone 2008; Dine 2008; Lichtenstein, 2002). The AFL-CIO would lead workers from the garment industry to tradesmen. Unions had believed their large numbers would give them sway in negotiations. This was true up until the 1950s when the economy and work place began to change (Gini, 2001). Unions had also become an institutionalized interest group ignoring the local needs of its members (Voss and Sherman, 2000). Unions were being represented by the

views of the upper management of unions which hadn't been on a union shop floor in possibly decades. The interests of these union business managers were too far removed from the actual issues members were troubled by.

The negative change in unions may be why there was limited use of the NLRB was found in the content analysis (Table 3). The unions and members were not communicating their goals or troubles which limited the union organizations collective action needed to bring a case to the NLRB. When this link between unions and members decreases, companies have more power over unions and an anti-union campaign can grow which is evident in the relatively high numbers of antiunion term content.

There was high, 30 or higher percent anti-union terminology used in half of the era compared to NLRB having 30% or more only three times in eight years (Table 3). This particular result strengthens my hypothetical belief that press coverage of unions is negative. This reinforced that the press coverage was controlled by the corporatist American President. The American press coverage of any issue should be non-biased especially if the bias is against the American working force. That is one of the most important reasons for this research. Companies used tactics such as fighting the National Labor Relations Board decisions, shutting down factories and moving companies into Right to Work states in the Southern states of the United States. These activities can be directly linked to the content analysis findings.

Union division was relatively high from 2004-2006 meaning the press was focused upon union weakness (Table 3). As the organizations crumbled

corporations would be getting more power evident in anti-union terminology. According to Clawson and Clawson (1999) unions didn't "devote more energy and resources to organizing in part because of the "powerful barriers to effective organizing" such as labor law weakness and "the vigor of employer opposition to unionization," (Clawson and Clawson, 1999: 100). The tactics eventually led members to feel that organizing needed to be increased.

In the last several years unions have begun to re-organize their efforts to increase membership and bargaining power. These may have been too late for some of the unions. In 2005, the major umbrella international organization of the majority of all United States unions broke into 2 major unions: the burdened AFL-CIO and the Change to Win unions. The division of the major union umbrella the AFL-CIO was based on the local organizations feelings that more organizing needed to be done to increase membership and power (Schiavone, 2008).

This shift in thought and focus by unions and their members was an upswing in motivation. This was an increase in the tide of renewal. Union members were again banding together to change the union structure but at a high cost of first splitting power to create change. The inside influence of infighting had taken a direct toll on unions. According to Glynn (2009), by this time in Bush's reign media coverage would almost be completely controlled by public relations experts. These experts might not have been sending much pr pieces to the media regarding Bush's re-election due to possible anti-war sentiment or economic recession worries from the public. Mulder (2006) states that

“journalism no longer considers itself a mirror of reality...news product is manufactured” by the media outlet. In order not to cultivate an anti-Bush during the election season the media was disregarded (Glynn, 2009).

As Glynn (2009) had stated in his study and Bekken (2005) as well, the press is framed to send messages to the public and these messages then form our reality. The study’s importance is then not only to decide on negative and positive press coverage but infer what these two trends could become for public opinion.

### *Sentences Create a New Lens*

The second part of the study was to rate sentences to discover a deeper evaluation of the positive or negative view they would create for an entire article. Studies surrounding unions have focused upon type of people interviewed such as corporate vs. union representation for quotes on union actions (Bekken 2005), decrease in union articles in the press (Bekken, 2005; Martin, 2004), number of articles covering strikes (Kumar, 2001) and even studies on the number of articles related to NLRB cases (Carriero, 2005). But they didn’t seem to answer my question regarding positive and negative coverage on an in-depth basis.

After completing the terminology aspect of the content analysis, I surmised that I needed more evidence to support my hypothesis that press coverage was negative during the Bush era. Both the organizing and issues terms didn’t have the substance to describe anything further than had already been discovered in previous studies. A more supportive answer could be found in a sentence-by-sentence content analysis. The next part of the study I examined

supplementary aspects of each article as well as sentences. As I go inside the articles I pored over the range of the articles, length and various percentages of article view. New aspects of the press and its coverage of unions were discovered.

In order to get a fuller picture of what message might be interpreted by the reader, I felt it important to exclude the neutral statements, and see whether or not the tone of the non-neutral statements was more positive or negative per year (Table 5). The ranges of percent of article that is positive-only, when compared to the negative-only statements, tend to be much more compact in range, less likely to be 0.0% (Table 5), and the median and mode are greater than 60% for every year, except 2004 (Table 6). These findings support the conclusion that the overall tones of non-neutral statements in articles were positive.

This conclusion is further supported when I looked at the non-neutral statements in an article. In every year except 2004, the average percentages of the article skews were positive (Table 4). In every year except 2004, the percentage of the article that is positive-only was at or greater than 60% or, to put another way, three-fifths of the entire non-neutral statements per year were coded as positive (Table 5). In 2004, the opposite was true, where the average percent of the article that was negative-only (excluding all neutral statements) was 63.1% (Table 5). This is unusual because unions have historically been highly involved in politics especially during national elections. A high level of political involvement would normally garner positive support in articles for unions. Bush's Whitehouse did have control of press during this election (Gylmn, 2009). Agenda setting by the anti-union Republican Party during this year can was

evident in the lack of positive press coverage. If the press wanted presidential coverage of the election than they had to have articles that would publicize Bush policy (Gylm, 2009).

### ***Overall results of All Sentences in study***

The study became intensely enlightening as the results were different than any previously seen in studies upon unions and the press. The articles range from 3 to 145 sentences per article over an 8 year period meaning there was a great deal of variation (Table 4). The mode doesn't help much either as 3-69 sentences per articles per year was only used twice inside eight years (Table 4). The variation is where the study became a new path for finding answers to the hypothetical belief that unions and press had a strained relationship due to decrease in articles and length. Even though they have the same range of articles, 2005 has an average of 10 more sentences per article than 2003 meaning range isn't a precise factor (Table 4). This led me to believe that each sentence was more significant due to the low level of variance.

Most articles in any given year are comprised of neutral statements on unions, and cannot easily be interpreted as having a mostly positive or negative tone toward unions when considered as a whole. Years 2002 – 2005 are exceptions, where the average percentage of neutral statements per article is less than 50% (Table 4). In 2002 and 2003, the average percentages of positive statements for all articles together are almost 50% (47.9% & 47.8%, respectively), suggesting that the articles about unions in the New York Times were most likely interpreted in a positive way by the reader (Table 4). In 2005, the average



percentages were almost evenly distributed with 1/3 of articles positive, negative, and neutral, with 34.0% positive, 29.2% negative, and 36.8% neutral (Table 4).

**Table 4: Average Composition of Sentences Per Articles**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Range of Sentences per Article</u>	<u>Average Article Length. In Sentences</u>	<u>Average Percentage of Positive Sentences Per Article</u>	<u>Average Percentage of Negative Sentences Per Article</u>	<u>Average Percentage of Neutral Sentences Per Article</u>	<u>N</u>
2001	8 - 145	41.4	17.9%	11.5%	70.6%	17
2002	3 - 102	47.2	47.9%	27.3%	24.8%	10
2003	19 - 69	34.5	47.8%	32.2%	18.4%	20
2004	16 - 95	45.3	23.5%	40.2%	36.3%	9
2005	3 - 69	44.1	34.0%	29.2%	36.8%	9
2006	4 - 68	30.1	22.9%	12.0%	65.1%	10
2007	15 - 70	31.2	24.6%	10.7%	64.7%	6
2008	12 - 42	27.7	32.5%	17.5%	50.0%	7

***Note: Percentages in columns denote average percentage for all articles throughout the entire year.***

2004 was the only year where the average percentage of neutral statements per article were less than 50% and the articles of unions were mostly negative, with the average of negative statements per article was 40.2% (Table 4).

The sentence-by-sentence analysis is remarkably interesting as the studies progress changed with the following results. My study's strength was found in the content of a sentence after all. The average positive statements are between 5-20.6 points higher than negative statements for the entire Bush Era (Table 4). The average number of positive sentences for union articles was only lower than the negative statements for one year, 2004, meaning the press utilized more positive statements for unions than negative in articles (Table 4). As I have discussed this

odd occurrence earlier in the study, 2004 is phenomenon. A slight explanation of politics can enlighten us on this occurrence. The Republican National Committee platform states “we oppose interventionist policies that put federal government in control of industry and allow it to pick winners and losers in the marketplace” (Republican National Committee 2010). Even though there had been Republican rule of the government and press (Glynn, 2009) their agenda was not advertised during a pivotal election year. The lack of political coverage does not support my hypothesis but does question the Bush and Republican administrations strength for this era. This is especially evident in a sentence-by-sentence analysis coding method.

### ***Politics within Sentences***

My belief that the press would be negative during the Bush era was based on the platform and ruler ship they were believed to have had. In further explaining the opposition between unions and the Republican Party led by Bush (2001-2009) this section is needed. Unions are interventionists, unsupported by the Republican Party, supportively created by the federal government when Taft Hartley Act and Wagner Act in the early 20th Century. Interventionism is the means by which a union can be created and protected to control the workers, production, pay and benefits for workers within the marketplace. The Republican Party platform does not want this type of organization within the marketplace. This platform statement is evidence regarding Bush and his administration in the 2000s. Unions were protected in the United States and other countries by the political opportunity they gave to local, state and national politicians and society.

The unions would use their members as campaign armies for candidates. These members would campaign for them on the premise that these candidates would fairly represent unions within the legislature.

As the 1990s rolled in “unions exercised less and less leverage within the Democratic Party”, (Clawson and Clawson, 1999: 97). Unions, who almost always support the Democratic Party, started to lose their support from that same party as Republicans became more popular. Takahishi (2003) explains that labor declined since 1980 due to a weakened national institutional base that was pro-union. This meaning that as a more anti-union campaign spread to corporations the less unions were allowed in the workplace. Corporations would even go to the extreme of closing plants and moving to other countries where labor was low wage and unions were obsolete. As this changed so did political opportunity for unions. This being explained the lack of politics or positive press coverage for unions in 2004 may have been affected by this Republican control. A decreased amount of candidates outreached to the unions for voter and campaign support as union membership declined. At the same time, if the Republican Party was more powerfully influencing the press, then unions would not be the top priority of the party, suggesting that my hypothesis would be correct. However, my research provides evidence to the contrary.

### ***Positive Sentences Steadily Increase***

In order to further define if an article is positive or negative the positive and negative sentences were separated from the neutral findings. The neutral sentences decreased over the eight year period from 70.6% in 2001 to 50.0% in

2008 (Table 4). As neutral sentences decreased, positive sentences increased from 17.9% in 2001 to 32.5% in 2008 (Table 4). This increase in positive statements further contradicted my hypothesized belief about Bush's control over the press. As a greater confirmation negative sentences within the Bush Era began at 11.5% in 2001 and end with 17.5% of sentences for the entire era (Table 4). Throughout the era negative sentences usually stayed in the low 20 percent range of sentences which was much lower for both positive and neutral sentences (Table 4).

As Bush seems to gain power by his double tenure as President he does not control more of the press or its message. Besides, 2004 and 2005 negative statements did not increase higher than positive statements (Table 4). They decreased creating a higher percentage for positive union representation in the press (Table 4). These results supported the creation of the final message of this study: in-depth sentence-by-sentence analysis was a method to find different results for press coverage of unions or any other issues. The historical studies relied on article numbers instead of what the articles contained.

This difference leads me to believe that the best way to find the answer to press coverage is not just skimming for whom, why and how but what is in an article. The positive coverage becomes greater when comparing only positive and negative sentences per articles per years. The content analysis is supportive that the political regime of the Bush Era did not have the closely monitored control found by Glynn (2009). Even as laws such as the Patriot Act were being created to challenge the privacy of Americans, journalists were still covering the struggles

of average citizens-union members. The higher number of positive statements reveals the press covered unions in a positive manner. The more positive an article was the more positive the coverage was.

***Non-Neutral Sentences: A New Day in Union Research***

In order to get a fuller picture of what message might be interpreted by the reader, I felt it important to exclude the neutral statements, and see whether or not the tone of the non-neutral statements was more positive or negative per year (Table 5). The ranges of percent of article that is positive-only, when compared to the negative-only statements, tend to be much more compact in range, less likely to be 0.0% (Table 5), and the median and mode are greater than 60% for every year, except 2004 (Table 6). These findings support the conclusion that the overall tones of non-neutral statements in articles were positive. This conclusion is further supported when I look at the non-neutral statements in an article.

***Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Non-Neutral Statements per Article, by Year***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average Number of Non-Neutral Statements per Article</b>	<b>Average Percent of Articles that is Positive-Only (Excluding Neutral)</b>	<b>Average Percent of Articles that is Negative-Only (Excluding Neutral)</b>	<b>Percent of Articles that are Positive-Only (Excluding Neutral), Range</b>	<b>Percent of Articles that are Negative-Only (Excluding Neutral), Percentage Range</b>
2001	10.9	69.4%	30.6%	16.7% -100.0%	0.0% - 83.3%
2002	35.5	63.7%	36.3%	40.4% -100.0%	0.0% - 59.6%
2003	27.6	59.8%	40.2%	29.3% -100.0%	0.0% - 70.7%
2004	28.9	36.9%	63.1%	11.1% - 83.3%	16.7% - 88.9%
2005	27.9	53.8%	46.2%	20.7% -100.0%	0.0% - 79.3%
2006	10.5	65.7%	34.3%	25.0% -100.0%	0.0% - 75.0%
2007	11.0	69.7%	30.3%	44.0% - 90.0%	10.0% - 55.6%
2008	13.9	64.9%	35.1%	38.5% -100.0%	0.0% - 61.5%

***Note: Percentages in columns denote average percentage for all articles throughout the entire year.***

In every year except 2004, the average percentages of the article skews positive (Table 5). In every year except 2004, the percentage of the article that is positive-only is at or greater than 60% or, to put another way, three-fifths of the entire non-neutral statements per year were coded as positive (Table 5). In 2004, the opposite was true, where the average percent of the article that is negative-only (excluding all neutral statements) was 63.1% (Table 5).

The final message of this study is based on finding if there is positive or negative coverage of unions in the press. The neutral statements were excluded to enable this result. When the factual statements were subtracted from the study the amount of positive or negative statements are apparent. These sentences tell the whole story. After looking at positive and negative only sentences per articles for a year, positive coverage was overwhelming (Table 5). Neutral statements are fact based without any tone so they do not decide a positive or negative tone. Besides the 2004 phenomenon, each year positive sentences were double that of negative statements (Table 5). When subtracting all neutral statements positive statements were the majority of an article. Positive sentences only in articles per year were between 53.8-69.7% for every year excluding the 2004 phenomenon (Table 5). Negative sentences only in articles per year were much lower at 30.3-46.2% per year excluding the phenomenon (Table 5). This is overwhelming evidence that by using a sentence-by-sentence content analysis the press coverage of unions is positive not negative as previously believed (Table 5).

By comparing data in certain years the results were more apparent. The comparison of negative and positive only permitted the content analysis to find if

sentences were more positive or negative. Every year excluding 2007 an entire article is comprised of only positive statements as evidenced in the range (Table 5). Every year at least one article is positive only, which is the opposite of negative which may not be found in any articles at least 6 out of 8 years (Table 5). In comparing range it is evident that the press during the Bush era is positive. The median of positive sentences is abundantly positive as well even in the year 2004 when negative sentences outnumber positive the range is very close with a small percentage difference (Table 5). The coverage is positive for unions by a large percentage especially when separation is used.

***Median and Mode Support Content Analysis Results***

The median is another method of formulating press coverage. The comparisons between positive and negative median percentages are much higher for positive sentences. The median tended to be closer to 50 points higher for positive sentences than for negative (Table 6). The median of positive sentences ranged from 62.3-78.6% for every year excluding 2004 (Table 6).

***Table 6: Comparison of Median and Mode for Positive and Negative Sentences (Excluding all Neutral Sentences), by Year***

Year	Percent of Articles that are Positive-Only (Excluding Neutral), Median Percentage	Percent of Articles that are Negative-Only (Excluding Neutral), Median Percentage	Percent of Articles that are Positive-Only (Excluding Neutral), Mode Percentage	Percent of Articles that are Negative-Only (Excluding Neutral), Mode Percentage	N
2001	72.7%	27.3%	100.0%	0.0%	17
2002	66.2%	33.8%	--	--	10
2003	62.3%	37.7%	100.0%	0.0%	20
2004	28.6%	71.4%	--	--	9
2005	70.6%	29.4%	--	--	9
2006	76.2%	23.8%	76.2%	23.8%	10
2007	76.8%	23.2%	90.0%	10.0%	6
2008	78.6%	21.4%	100.0%	0.0%	7

***Note: Percentages in columns denote average percentage for all articles throughout the entire year.***

The mode percentages are interesting as well. In 2001, 2003 and 2008 the mode was 100 percent of articles were positive and negative was 0.0% (Table 6). This is a clear statement by the sentence-by-sentence content analysis that the press coverage of unions is positive in many cases (Table 6). The mode of the articles only re-emphasized that Bush's leadership did not have a great impact on press coverage but that simplistic mathematical formulas do tell the inside story coverage. The mode of the articles was 65% are neutral, 48% were positive and 12% were negative for the entire era (Table 6). Even a simplistic formula such as mode states that the press is more positive than negative about unions.

Negative sentences were lower by almost 36 percentage points than that of positive. That is a very high number when comparing negative versus positive statements. Positive sentences are surprisingly high for the type of control the Republican Bush administration had over media. If Glynn (2009) found that the media was controlled by the Bush administration, positive coverage on unions defies this. A sentence-by-sentence analysis of unions in an era controlled by a very anti-Republican platform organization, demonstrated that the media may not be as controlled as we may think. Throughout the entire content analysis positive coverage was abundantly present strengthening the first part of the analysis (Tables 4, 5, and 6). Now, between the terminology results of a slight margin of more positive coverage, the second part makes the study concrete: the press positively represented unions.



### *Conclusion of Content Analysis*

The results of this comparison not only debunked my hypothesis but change the scholarly belief that unions and media have a strained relationship. According to these results an in-depth analysis of unions within the press suggested a strong indication of positive press coverage. The percentages re-tell the story of unions and the press. These results were even more poignant due to the changed method of union and press analysis. As my study suggested the people involved that the press includes in the article or making quotes, which according to Bekken (2005) are normally corporate, are not as important as in a sentence-by-sentence analysis.

The entire structure of the entire article is a better method to find a more detailed analysis of press coverage. A corporate officer of a company may make negative or anti-consumer comments regarding unions but the sentences that surround that make a difference in the complete type of coverage. The press, as presented through historical context in this study, may have decreased their number of union articles but the coverage is positive. Scholars and the public may believe this is a negative reflection of the press but this study suggests the opposite. The importance of this study is not only to find a bias in press coverage but the more refined method in which to find it. A new manner to find the governmental control of press coverage is evident through a thorough content analysis. The sentence-by-sentence structure of the content analysis enables the researcher to extract any extraneous information from an article to reveal the final message.

### *Influences on Results*

The positive coverage can be from several factors including conflict theory (Shin, et al., 2005). Conflict theory is the struggle that two people or organizations have in winning the same race. In the press it is the conflict of journalists who are paid by the media conglomerates to write for their papers. The journalists must decide whether they write the pro-press corporate message or their own. The corporate leaders have to attempt to censor the journalists. The authors as journalists may have to write for the paper but may decide the tone of the articles. If a journalist is pro-union or more heavily influenced by the corporate sponsorship of the newspaper the article may reflect that. This belief may be supported by the results of this study.

A journalist may use a sentence such as “Currently 3 million people are unemployed surrounding Detroit but union workers are still threatening to strike for better health benefits in a town that is now dependent on public aid for benefits.” This sentence could be viewed by a reader that union workers are being greedy when most people would love just to have a job. This is an example of how each sentence a journalist chooses has a direct effect on the building of an article and the tone used within. Another part of the final message was to make sure articles had a true focus upon unions. George Gerbner (1979, as cited by Michael Morgan and James Shanahan, 2010) formed the “cultivation theory” which can be used to support my belief that media’s tone and type of coverage creates the view Americans copy in deciding their attitude and beliefs. George Gerbner (1979, as cited by Michael Morgan and James Shanahan, 2010), stated

that people form their view of issues and reality by what they see in the news (he focused upon television but all media is messages).

The cultivation of the above issues lends a supportive framework for deciding if media messages in the New York Times are positive or negative. A higher amount of negative or anti-union messages in the press may convince people to lean towards a more negative view of unions. Journalists may write articles that focus on the monetary demands of unions at a time when America is in a recession. This type of focus may create a negative view of unions to the public. Gerbner's (1979, as cited by Michael Morgan and James Shanahan, 2010) theory can further be related and intertwined with examples from opinion polls.

Panagopoulous and Francia's (2008) trend poll study on American attitudes on unions is important to relate this study to the opinion Americans have of unions. In 2005 52% of Americans favored unions compared to 34% which sided with corporations (Panagopoulous and Francia, 2008: 137). Gerbner's (1979, as cited by Michael Morgan and James Shanahan, 2010) theory would support the belief that negative news coverage has a bad effect on unions. In 1981 when strikes were a union norm the opinion of Americans for unions was lower (Panagopoulous and Francia, 2008). News coverage is based upon attracting readers, so then why do unions get such a small amount of coverage? This opinion poll supported the framework for the issues that were found in the content analysis. Martin (2004) examines the role of consumerism in the media and its relationship with union news coverage, and provides insight into one of the reasons that people have a tendency to dislike unions. The media insists upon

covering union activity in the guise of creating obstacles to consumer production and increasing prices. Therefore, this poll is an example of how unions may be influenced by media. How does a highly unionized country that created a middle-class from unions become anti-union? Therefore, previous studies illustrate a journalistic prejudice against union activity in their coverage.

## CHAPTER FIVE

My original hypothesis that the press's coverage of unions would be negative during the Bush Era (2001-2009) was not supported by the data I found. But what I did find adds to the research on union representation in the media. Union newspaper coverage has continued to decline as well as union membership numbers. This decline has not had the negative effect on type of press coverage. Press coverage of unions is positive and encouraging to unions and labor scholars. It seems that the Republican Party Platform and control of the press by the Bush Administration did not have the negative effect on unions as I had originally thought. Glynn (2009) was correct that Bush's treatment of the press may have affected the decline of press articles. But Bush's power over the press couldn't change what was said in an article. The intent of this content analysis and historical recap was to prove that unions may have a slighted image within newspaper coverage. It has proven the opposite changing earlier studies.

The first part of the content analysis on issue and organizing terminology was too weak to decide my hypothesis. The second part based on sentence-by-sentence content analysis was needed to fully see comparable results of positive and negative coverage. A breakdown of these two parts will further explain. Organizing terminology is more positive for union coverage but hampered by anti-union coverage. New unions/union expansion is 20% of the articles compared to 15% for anti-union articles. Meaning there is only a 5% difference in the amount of articles for either view which is a relatively low number. Overall, either of these views only controlled 35% of the entire study meaning

many other activities were covered in the press. That weakness led me to search into union issue terminology. In the second part of findings I graded all the sentences within in an article to determine their positive, negative or neutral tone. The results concluded an overwhelmingly positive number of sentences. Every year whether graded with neutral sentences or only graded for positive or negative sentences, positive was the highest percentage of sentences. The range, median and mode formulas concluded that articles are abundantly positive in union press coverage. Various reasons are connected to this positive coverage. A change in union organizing mobilization appears to be the greatest.

Scholarly research and the results of this study can conclude that union expansion is an indicator for positive coverage. Unions such as the SEIU saw the dawn of expanding unionization into the rapidly expanding service industry (Milkman, 2000). Unions had begun to include immigrants in an effort to return to the Labor Movements original roots of social justice (Voss and Sherman, 2000). This type of action garners the interest of unions as it includes strikes and protests which draw people and readers attention. Unions had also changed their institutional methods of organizing to community unionism (Fine, 2005). As unions included ethnic people they also included their communities which supported social justice and union expansion (Park, 2004). Unions had decided to go against the anti-immigrant belief of their membership (Waldinger, 2008) to attempt to save the movement. These actions would allow for expanded unions, new unions and organizing actions that would attract the press. According to Clawson and Clawson five major perspective elements needed to be confronted in

the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: demographic changes, the role of the union itself as an institution, the state in the form of the legal system, globalization and neo-liberalism and the employer anti-union defense (Clawson and Clawson, 1999). All of these are being answered by unions through protest and covered positively in the press.

One of my beliefs about the results of this study suggests that journalists have more power over articles than their corporate leaders. As Glynn (2009) had suggested the press was driven to report coverage by political intimidation. But if that had been true than my hypothesis would have been correct. Journalists might not control how many articles about unions can be published but have more power in the way they are published. Even though my hypothesis may not be correct my study has indications of many new manners to research unions and press coverage.

With that said, the study does have limitations. The amount of articles is very small with many shorter than others. Articles ranged from 3 to 145 sentences and from 6-20 articles a year. That is a small number of press coverage to analyze and draw generalizable conclusions. The strength of the study lies in the literature review and its relationship to my findings. The majority of the research cited is very recent. Most of the articles and books are written during and within a 10 year period of the study. This suggests that the newest research and data is available, but potentially underutilized. The historical theories which are older are still the presiding leaders in media research as well. This study has a

single person grading the sentences within the content analysis. A broader range of judges from different areas of expertise could strengthen the study as well.

The future of unions and press coverage is an evolutionary matter. There are several suggestions for the future of this study and its results: greater variety of newspaper sources, location of articles, journalistic background and inclusion of social movement and social justice theory.

First, a much more expansive study such as a comparison of American newspapers from the East Coast, West Coast, Midwestern and Southern regions could alter the results. The coverage from the South where there is a higher number of Right to Work states would probably be completely different than the other regions. This comparison could expand the types of issues and organizing patterns of unions further expanding the terminology used in union press coverage. This might enlighten scholars and people around the world on the evolution of union matters in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Secondly, the location of union articles has changed from the early reports of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to present day. Joe Bekken (2005) and a score of other leading scholars report union articles are now placed more in the business section of newspapers. What type of affect does this truly have on the public's knowledge and perception of unions? Thirdly, who are the people writing these articles? Are they pro-union journalists such as Steven Greenberg or are they Republican propagandists? Does the type of coverage change with different journalists? Lastly, the use of the results of this study can be included in the revitalized Labor Movement across the world. These articles could be observed as this study has to suggest changes, strengths and weaknesses



in the struggle for social justice through unionization. There are diverse manners that press and media coverage can alter people's lives. Unions and the press can possibly have an abundant effect on the future of the middle-class as well as the lower-classes.

### **Conclusion**

Unions and the press may not have a strained relationship after all. Newspaper readership is plummeting suggesting the paper will publish articles more connected to their advertiser's wishes. The press may also have their own battle with space for articles as newspapers are constantly shrinking. At the beginning of the Bush Era there are almost twice as many articles published as at the end. The article length also diminished. These facts suggest that unions may need to find different outlets for positive coverage.

As newspapers shrink news from internet sources has skyrocketed. Almost every homepage has a news link covering an abundant array of subjects, journalists and countries. But the comments section at the end of every article changes the message. The public has a chance to change the message of the article by espousing their beliefs upon the coverage. If a positive article on unions is on the homepage, then what affect do the comments have on changing coverage to the masses? If there are many comments degrading unions does it end up having a negative effect on the articles tone? The Republican Party and the business leaders who help frame the Party's message are a public relations genius. Their followers have a tendency to use the media to publicize their beliefs whether it is in call in radio or commenting on stories. The comments section can

draw international opinions. If someone in a Right to Work state dislikes unions and he comments and others comment along with him what happens to the positive coverage of that article? I suspect that the original message of the writer will be lost amongst a cacophony of opinion, which may or may not be informed from data or evidence. In essence, the article becomes, for a fleeting moment, an episode of the Jerry Springer show filled with screaming opinions that drown out the original intended message.

The Republican Party and any anti-unionists can change the agenda setting of an article through writing anti-union comments. A union may use an article to set their agenda with a journalist but the effects of the comments can be destructive. People listen to other people and follow each other. People have a tendency to believe in trends and fads. People are also highly apathetic and believe in hegemony which would both have negative affects on union articles. If people just follow comments instead of research something the agenda and framing of an article on the internet changes. The last thing someone reads is usually what sticks with them.

According to Rampton and Stauber (2001) from 40% and higher of a news story is based on a public relations piece sent from a company. If newspapers and media outlets want to cut back on their payroll they could incorporate these pieces as articles. If so, then agenda setting of an article can become even more hazardous to the facts of a situation for unions. Corporations have more influence upon the news due to ownership rights. Do the homepage news outlets really use journalists or is the information sent from Public Relations firms? Are the

employees of these firms making the majority of comments on an article? If they want to keep their jobs they will be involved in protecting their articles. There are many lessons to learn about agenda setting and its affects on the social justice struggle in an ever widening American class gap.

The results of the study that coverage is actually abundantly positive suggests unions still are newsworthy. Not only are they newsworthy but they can be an attraction for journalists. The idea of social justice through unionization is still a strong issue within the press. Union membership may have dwindled but support for the future is there. Bush may have been one of the greatest anti-labor presidents and administrations but they could not defeat the unions in the press. The positive coverage also suggests that the press can still be a safe haven for the freedom of speech. Politicians cannot stop journalist from relaying their personal ideas and opinions nor the true actions in everyday of American life.

Conflict theory suggests that the positive agenda setting and framing within the news articles suggests a strong indication of union strength. But as these articles continue to decrease what is the future of positive press for unions? Several ideas came to mind: unions must send their own public relations pieces to the press, unions and other non-conservative associations may start their own homepages and these same associations/organizations must use better outreach to their members when articles are published on the internet. A strong grassroots approach to defending unions in the press on the internet can maintain a positive frame for the articles. Unionists and other non-conservatives need to use their time and effort to defend themselves the same way the Republican machine

empowers their people. This type of action also shows that union members are actively defending themselves and their way of life. It also shows that their structure is strong and will be used to publicize their needs. Politicians, news staff and anti-unionists need to see more action by unions. Researching the use of comments in the internet news would give the world an abundant amount of information on people's beliefs.

The press can still be researched from different perspectives. Analysis can be strengthened through a variety of methods to find answers to all questions not just my own. Union scholarship has been strengthened by the unintended result of this study. I hope that unions, scholars and union members can appreciate that social justice is still alive and well in the press.

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